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# "I Was Tortured in the Pasadena Jailhouse!"

by

## Bobby Fischer

## The World Chess Champion

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## *Bank Robbery . . .*

About 2:00 p.m. Tuesday afternoon, May 26, 1981, as I was peacefully and lawfully walking towards Lake Street in Pasadena across from the Kaiser Permanente medical offices, a policeman in a car suddenly pulled up alongside the curb and said he wanted to talk to me because I fitted perfectly the description of a man who had just committed a bank robbery. I politely told him he had the wrong man and I hadn't committed any bank robbery, and that I didn't know anything about it whatsoever.

The policeman then proceeded to ask me a number of questions regarding my name, residence, age, etc. I answered all of these questions politely and truthfully. He then began to repeat the questions over and over again. I answered them over and over again. He asked for my identification and I showed it to him. He asked how long I'd lived in the area, and where I was from originally. I told him. He asked what I did for a living and I told him.

Suddenly a second police car pulled alongside and I was soon surrounded by at least three or four policemen. On at least three or more separate occasions I was asked where I lived, and I told them I didn't have the exact street address but since it was only a block or two away I would show them where it was. They showed no interest whatsoever in this reasonable suggestion. The policeman who had just arrived in the second car began to repeat the same questions that the policeman in the first car had asked. I told him I'd already answered those questions. I was asked for my driver's license and I told them I didn't drive.

The policemen became extremely hostile and threatening in their manner. They began to say among themselves, "He's probably wanted out of state."—"You think we should arrest him?"—"Yeah, I think so, let's take him down to headquarters," etc.

## *Serious . . .*

At one point early in the questioning by the first officer before the second car had arrived I was told, "This is serious." This simple statement spilled the beans on the entire police operation and clearly revealed it to be the filthy stinking set up it was. If the officer really believed I had just

robbed a bank, the officer would know that I damn well knew it was "serious" and he wouldn't make such a stupid statement.

## *Arrested . . .*

As I stated earlier, the officers began to repeat the same questions over and over again, interspersing comments among themselves that they'd have to take me to the station. I said, "I don't know anything about this bank robbery and I've already answered your questions and I don't have to give you any further answers to the same questions." I said, "I have the right to remain silent after giving you basic information about myself." The officer, said, "Well, you're thinking of New York state. The laws are different out here."

The questions and threats to arrest me continued. I said, "I'm not answering any more questions. If you want to arrest me, arrest me—that's it." The one officer from the second car who was obviously the leader of the pack said, "Arrest him!"

## *Brutally Handcuffed . . .*

I was immediately handcuffed in a brutal fashion, the police pushing my hands way, way up behind my back and causing me considerable discomfort and pain. Later I saw that the metal had torn into the flesh of both my wrists. I was put into a police car but was unable to move in far enough for them to close the door because there is some kind of a hump in the middle of the back seat. After several attempts to shut the door by brutally pushing my right leg with his right leg, the officer finally succeeded in closing the door by pushing my leg in with the door itself. Later I saw that my right knee had turned black and blue.

## *False Arrest . . .*

At one point as they were leading me into the car after they had arrested me, I saw the officer that had first approached me continue the bank robbery charade. He showed the leader of the pack officer what appeared to be a photocopy of an artist's rendition of the supposed bank robbery suspect. I also

saw the picture. With the exception of the fact that we both wore beards, the picture did not look in the least bit like me. The man in the picture wore glasses, his face was completely different from mine, the hair on his head was different, etc., etc.

It was absolutely impossible to mistake me for him. And if after honestly (which was definitely not the case here) mistaking me for the man in the picture, it could not possibly take more than a few seconds at most by comparing the picture with my face to realize the mistake.

But obviously the bank robbery bit was just a lying transparent pretext for approaching and arresting me. The officers never had the slightest question in their minds that I might be the so-called "bank robber." The officer who showed him the picture said, "It looks just like him, doesn't it?" The leader of the pack officer said, "Naw, that's not him."

On the way to the police station an announcement came over the police car radio on the police band. One officer said, "That's it—they just caught the bank robber!"

## *Insulted . . .*

On the way to the station, I was insulted several times, called an asshole, etc. At some point (perhaps it was already at the jailhouse) the police said, if I wasn't such an asshole they wouldn't have arrested me. After we got to the police station and I got out of the car, I said, "Well, you've got the bank robber. What do you want with me now? He said, "We just want to talk to you inside." I said, "About what?" Answer—"Let's just talk inside." Inside they began repeating the same questions again. I was seated and still had my hands handcuffed behind my back. When I refused to give them any more information I was physically attacked.

## *Choked . . .*

The leader of the pack officer said, "We want to find out what this is all about!" Without any provocation of any kind on my part, he grabbed my throat with one hand and started choking me by the neck, pushing me backward in the chair (throughout all this "interrogation," savagery and physical assault, I was seated and with my hands handcuffed behind my back)

and putting his face close up to mine grimaced and shouted, "Talk!"

As he was choking me a woman who apparently worked there walked by. She quickly turned her head to the left to look in the room to see what the commotion was all about. When she saw that I was being choked by the neck she quickly turned her head away and continued walking down the hallway. She obviously didn't want to see something she shouldn't see and get involved on my behalf to save my life—it could cost her her job, you know. The crazed officer who was choking me realized he'd been a little careless and with his hand still on my neck choking me he told another cop to close the door. The choking episode continued for perhaps about a total of 10 or 20 seconds. When the crazed officer saw that I refused to talk or cringe and whine and beg for mercy, he released my throat and jumped back with a fearful look in his face like he'd just seen a ghost.

I said, "I don't believe this—being choked by the neck with my hands handcuffed behind my back by a policeman at the station to get me to talk. I thought this was only in the comic books!" A couple of the officers chuckled at my naiveté. The leader of the pack crazed officer snapped, "Book him!" and took off.

## *Assailant Description . . .*

I think just for the record it is appropriate to physically describe the officer who choked me since I don't know his name. He's, I'd say, in his late thirties or early forties, with kind of two-toned hair that stands up kind of prickly or goes straight back. One part of the hair in front seems brown and the other blond or gray. He's thin and lanky and fairly tall. He's hyperaggressive, like a little dog who barks and snaps a lot and bares his teeth. He is also quite vicious.

I believe this should be more than sufficient to pin down the name and identity of this officer. I described him thusly to someone who is familiar with the Pasadena police and he immediately knew who I was talking about although he didn't recall the name offhand. I'm sure I could easily recognize him if I saw him again. For example I could easily pick him out of a police lineup.

## Stark Naked . . .

After this I was taken upstairs to the jail part of the police department. One of the officers who arrested me said to the man behind the desk, "We've got him on the identity" or "We've got him on the identity thing." When I told the man at the desk there who wanted me to answer questions that I had just been choked by the neck downstairs, he sarcastically sniggered, "Aw, they wouldn't do that, uh, uh, they're good men. I know them, they'd never do that," and he sneered. When I refused to answer any more questions and after they had taken all my personal belongings, I was led to a cell and they forced me to strip completely naked and leave all my clothes outside the cell. When I stripped down to my jockey mesh shorts, I said, "This too?" referring to my underpants, and the jailer nodded and said, "Yes." I took my underpants off and gave it to him also.

## No Phone Call . . .

I was refused the right to make a phone call.

After the desk officer joker locked the door of the cell he snickered, "The phone's on the wall." Of course, there was no phone there.

## Horror Cell . . .

The cell had no sheets, no bed, no mattress, no covers—absolutely nothing except a few thin pieces of toilet paper. I was forced to lie stark naked on a painted metal bunk with little round holes in it everywhere. After a very short period of time, of course, this became unbearable and excruciatingly uncomfortable and painful. To add to my discomfort the light was turned on in the cell. I was kept locked up in that cell until some time Wednesday morning, May 27, when I was transferred to another cell that made my first cell seem like a picnic.

## Isolation & Torture . . .

This cell was a kind of isolation cell. Way in the far corner overlooking the street, it had two windows on different walls of the room, both windows being open. The cell door was

completely solid with no opening except a one-way peep hole for the jailers to look in. The room was extremely drafty and cold and dank.

Of course, my suffering in this room was completely horrendous and unbearable, being still stripped stark naked as I was. My body and flesh are still in pain and agony from this gruesome and cruel experience as I write these lines about 8 or 10 days later. I was left in there to freeze to death or die from exposure.

I shouted to numerous passersby in the street to call a certain telephone number and to tell them that I was being tortured to death in the Pasadena police station, which was absolutely the truth.

In addition to all of the pain and torment I felt from the cold, the draftiness, and lack of clothes, at about noontime the room became extremely noisy from the street traffic. By any standards, the decibel level was such as could easily cause permanent hearing damage. Also, at intervals, trains would rumble by at extremely loud noise levels. And of course being imprisoned in the room above city traffic, the smog level was even worse than normal.

I was left for many hours on end isolated in this room without anyone coming to the door or into the room to talk to me.

I had once read a book on brainwashing and it told how in North Korea, captured American G.I.'s during the Korean war were placed in rooms and forced to sleep on freezing blocks of ice. But I simply could not believe that here in the "civilized" U.S., a somewhat modified and slower (though equally deadly) treatment was being applied by American citizens to another American citizen. And all this without a trial, without any accusations being made against me, etc. My crime was simply that I had nothing more to say to these gangster police officers of Pasadena!!! Incredible, but true.

After I had been tortured in this room for some time, some jailers came in and told me that if I'd talk to them and give them more information, they'd give me my clothes back, and that I was being punished for my "attitude." They said they couldn't take me down to the court to see the judge until the arrest form had been all filled out. They said the judge wouldn't even see me until then. I reminded them that I'd been choked by the neck and that I had nothing more to say to them, and that I'd do my talking to the judge.

## *Mental Hospital . . .*

They told me that they might have to send me to a mental institution for observation. They asked me what year it was, what month it was, etc. I easily answered these stupid questions.

I told them again and again I wanted to make a phone call. I was refused. I was told, "You're not going to make a phone call or see the judge until we get the information we want." Numerous times I was bargained with, that they'd give me my clothes back if I'd give them the information they wanted.

## *Starving & Freezing . . .*

I was denied food for some 24 hours or so straight. I told them they were starving and freezing me to death. They said, "Die! We hope you do. You can die for all I care," etc.

## *Inside Mattress . . .*

In order to save my life and to try to get out of the cold and draft, I crawled inside the linoleum covered plastic mattress. A jailer looked in through the peep hole and asked me what I was doing inside the mattress. I told him I was trying to get out of the cold. He said I had destroyed prison property by doing so. So I said, "What do you want me to do—quietly freeze to death to make you happy?" He said, "Yes, I hope you do freeze to death, I don't care." I was told, "That's another charge against you–destroying prison property." He told me to get out of the mattress. I said, "Give me my clothes and I will." He left.

Incidentally, I didn't destroy the mattress or any other prison property. The mattress had already been opened by somebody else before me. Much later, just before my release from that hell hole—the Pasadena jailhouse—I was transferred to another cell (for many prisoners) and saw several more of these particular mattresses they have up there. They were all in good condition and sewed up. I looked them over and estimate that it would be extremely difficult—virtually impossible—to open them up without a knife or sharp cutting object of some kind. I suppose they are made that way deliberately. And, of course, I had no knife or any other object of any kind in my isolation cell.

The charge that I destroyed the mattress is totally laughable because the mattress was my only chance to even partially try to get out of the cold, dankness and draftiness. It would have made absolutely no sense whatever for me to destroy it.

However, I would add that in order to save my life from the freezing cold I would have been fully justified in destroying one or even a thousand of those mattresses, or even destroying the entirety of the prison. If one is allowed to kill in self defense, how much more should he be allowed to destroy a cheap prison mattress to save his life. Although I reiterate I did not destroy said mattress or anything else in the jailhouse.

On numerous occasions I was threatened with being sent to a mental hospital for observation. I was told if I didn't stop screaming they were going to come into the cell and stuff a towel or rag in my mouth to shut me up. I told the jailer if he did I would smash his blankety-blank head off. I also added that I hadn't eaten all day.

## *T.V. Dinner . . .*

The next thing I knew I was brought my first food for over 24 hours, which shows you never know what to expect next in a madhouse. It consisted of two T.V. dinners and a little bit of a soft drink. I ate one T.V. dinner and decided to save the other one for later since the "room service" was so irregular. A while later, however, I was transferred back to the cell they'd put me in originally when I first came to the jailhouse. I asked the jailer to let me take the other T.V. dinner with me but he refused permission.

## *No Water . . .*

The cell they returned me to now had no running water. They claimed they just couldn't understand it; "the water and plumbing had worked just fine in there before,"—chuckle, chuckle. After I was returned to this cell for what seemed like a very long time—some ten hours or so or perhaps more—I became very, very thirsty, having had only a small amount of water to drink since my arrival. (Of course, how could I know they would later deny me even this basic necessity?)

## Sick Cop . . .

I told them I was hungry and especially thirsty, and that there was no running water in my cell. Just to make doubly sure I didn't get any water to drink, the toilet was full of urine. They either laughed, made snide remarks, ignored me, or told me I was being "punished" for my attitude. Finally, after countless repeated requests for water, a big, tall blond or red-headed cop came over to my cell window and smiled in and said, "Here, I've got some water for you." Something about his "friendly" laughing attitude made me suspicious, and I said, "Open the door and bring it in—I can't take it through the steel mesh opening. It's too small, how can I get it?"

He answered, "You ever hear of a straw? Come here, I'll give it to you through a straw." I half suspected something was up and as I got up out of the bunk I found I was right—he threw the water all over my back and on the metal bunk and on the small pieces of toilet paper I had placed on the metal bunk to make it ever so slightly softer. The big cop walked away laughing hysterically. He was saying to his jailer officer buddies, "Did you see that? Ha, ha, ha!" I said, "You're really sick, only a sick person would do that." He said, "I know it, ha, ha, ha, that's why they hired me, ha, ha, ha, ha!" This is typical of the kind of sicko's and whacko's who run the Pasadena jailhouse and work for the Pasadena police force.

## Police Indecency . . .

I should also add that in the jailhouse there are lady jailers and female prisoners. The female jailers were constantly walking past my cell and could see right into it and see me stark naked. The same for women prisoners. I remember at least one colored young lady prisoner being led past my cell. Where is the decorum and decency in all this? Also, I was twice forced to walk stark naked down the hallway of the jailhouse when I was transferred to different cells, in plain view of all.

## Threats . . .

Later I was threatened again with being sent to a mental hospital for 30 days observation, then I'd be sent back here,

and he said something about Norwalk, or Norfolk. Numerous times I told them I thought I had the constitutional right under the fifth amendment to remain silent. They replied, "No, not until you give us the information we want." I said, "You mean you're just going to keep me here forever, incommunicado until I talk?" "That's right," was the answer. "Here, or we'll send you to a mental hospital. You're obviously a very sick person."

Finally some time on Thursday morning, May 28th, I received my breakfast, which consisted of a few tablespoons of milk, a small carton of sugar coated cornflakes, and a canned peach slice. This was the first liquid I had had in a very long time.

## *Same Questions & Answers . . .*

A man who said he was the chief jailer there, an older white-haired cop, told me that the reason my clothes were taken away from me was that I might use them to commit suicide since I was obviously crazy. I said, "Well, have somebody watch me then." Answer—silence. Then he promised to send me to the judge that morning if I'd answer just five questions. I asked him to tell me the five questions (it turned out to be six) in advance and I'd consider it.

The six questions were:

#1. Your name
#2. Your place of birth
#3. Your date of birth
#4. Your address
#5. Your height
#6. Your weight

I answered the questions and some time later was given my clothes back. I got dressed and was transferred to a big cell with several other prisoners.

## *Police Crimes . . .*

The police now for the first time answered my questions about what the charges were. They told me the charges against me were interferring with the duties of an officer. (I joked to some of the other prisoners that I was being charged with "interferring with the crimes of an officer.")

I was also told that I had a second charge against me now since I was brought into the jail, i.e., destruction of prison property, namely a prison mattress. The old white-haired chief jailer told me the mattress cost $80.00 new. "You're going to be charged with destruction of prison property for getting in that mattress." They also told me that bail was set at $500.00 on each count, for a grand total of $1,000.00 (one thousand dollars) cash.

I told the head jailer that now I wanted to see the judge as he'd promised. He broke his word and said that there'd now developed some problem and that I wouldn't be able to see the judge today, that I'd have to wait until tomorrow for that.

## *Phone Call . . .*

I was allowed to make phone calls from the public pay phone in this new cell. I called someone and told them the situation, that I'd been arrested, choked by the neck, and held in the Pasadena jailhouse incommunicado and stark naked for the past 48 hours or so, etc. The person was shocked but relieved to hear from me since naturally the person had been very worried about my disappearance.

## *Fingerprints . . .*

After the person came down to the jailhouse and put up the bail money, I was taken to a special room for a mug shot and to be fingerprinted. I asked the head jailer what if I refused to be fingerprinted, what would he do? He said they'd break every bone in my hands if they had to to get those fingerprints.

## *Signed Unread . . .*

After the mug shot and the fingerprinting, thumb printing, hand printing, palm printing, etc., I was told to sign numerous documents, perhaps as many as 10 or more. I told the chief jailer that I like to read documents before I sign them. He insisted that I just sign them.

I reiterated my previous statement and started to read them. He demanded that I sign the documents at once without giving me time to even partially glance at them. He covered the document with his hand and arm and said, "All

that concerns you is this here part at the bottom of the page," indicating what looked like a kind of stamp or form letter part of certain words which I did not have time to read either.

Having had little or no sleep for over two days and suffering from exhaustion, and knowing that a document signed under physical duress has no validity in law, and being in a hurry to get out of that damn hell hole, I signed the documents without reading them. I was not allowed to read them.

For all I know I signed a confession that I killed 20 Pasadena police officers and that I destroyed all the mattresses in the entire jailhouse and then tore the jailhouse down with my bare hands.

## *No Written Charges . . .*

The charges made against me until now, two weeks later, are still all verbal. I have received no written accusation of any charges against me whatsoever. All they gave was two receipts for $500.00 bail on each one. No accusations on them, and as a matter of fact no clear command to appear anywhere.

## *(No) Money Back . . .*

Finally I was taken back to the desk where I had checked in at and had left my personal belongings some two days earlier. As I was putting my belongings in my pockets, I noticed that my wallet was empty of money. I remembered that when I left home that Tuesday I had nine dollars in cash and well over another dollar in change. I also distinctly remembered counting out the bills when I was checked into the jail and they took my belongings. I remembered clearly the arresting officer snickering as he counted out the bills, "Six, seven, eight, nine dollars," snicker.

So now I said to the chief jailer, "Hey, where's my money? I had ten bucks." He shouted, "No, you didn't! You had no money when you came in here!" I said, "What are you talking about? I had ten dollars." Some kind of eye communication went on between the chief jailer and the man behind the desk. The chief jailer quickly changed his attitude and asked the man behind the desk if I came in there with the money. He nodded and said, "Yes," or something, and the chief jailer

quickly gave me a ten dollar bill and marked something on a piece of paper, or made as if he were marking something on a piece of paper.

Incidentally, I had given them when I checked in either a five dollar bill and four ones plus well over a dollar in change or nine ones plus well over a dollar in change (I'm 99% sure it was the former). What happened to those bills and change is an interesting question in itself. I had previously been given three dimes by the chief jailer for my phone calls so I didn't bother arguing about the exact change that might still be due me, especially since it looked like I was actually about to get out of that hell hole.

That afternoon I was told I could go, and an electronically operated gate was opened and I took the elevator down and left the jailhouse. A while later I noticed that several pills of mine had been stolen by the police/jailers. I presume they destroyed the pills hoping to find that they were illegal. When they found nothing—well, bye-bye pills.

## *Sham . . .*

Legality is a sham at the jailhouse. There are No Smoking signs everywhere, and no smoking is rigidly enforced—for the prisoners. But I noticed a light-skinned colored cop/jailer smoking whenever he pleased.

Numerous interesting and curious questions arise regarding why I was stopped by the policeman as "a bank robbery suspect." The first officer who stopped me said, "There's just been a bank robbery . . .," etc. Then a few minutes later in the police car on the way to the police station, an officer told me that they'd just picked up the bank robber. My question is how could the police have had a photocopy of an artist's rendition of what the bank robbery suspect looked like in the short time that presumably had occurred between the time of the bank robbery and the time the first officer (photocopy of the artist's rendition of the bank robber in hand) had approached me?

## *Unasked Questions . . .*

Why wasn't I asked any questions about the bank robbery if that were the real reason I was stopped? I was never asked where I'd been the last few minutes, never told what bank had

been robbed, how much had been taken, etc. I was not out of breath from running, had no weapon, only a little cash on me. They never bothered to check my face against that of the artist's rendition of the bank robber until *after* I was already arrested. To say the whole thing stinks and is a frame up and set up is to put it mildly.

## *True Events . . .*

The foregoing text was written between about June 5 and June 8, 1981, then later typed, edited, slightly revised, corrected, etc. However, no attempt has been made to bring it up to date or to incorporate later information or events, etc. It is a brief outline, a hastily written sketch, of the horrendous and incredible but absolutely true events that occurred to me in my life between about 2:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 26, 1981, and about 1:30 p.m. Thursday, May 28, 1981. I do not pretend that this is literature. However, it is absolutely accurate in all the main points, at least a thousand times more accurate and truthful than anything you will hear from the other side—i.e., the policemen and the jailers and all the rest of the law enforcement authorities. Perhaps in the future when I have more time to devote to it I will write a revised and expanded and even more accurate and painstakingly written account of these events.

Sincerely,

Robert D. James

Robert D. James (professionally known
as Robert J. Fischer or Bobby Fischer,
The World Chess Champion)

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